

AZTEC ACE

**RAGING
AGAINST
THE GODS...**

**...IN
NECROPOLIS
NIGHTS**



by Doug Moench, Dan Day and Nestor Redondo!



SABRE

**The book
and
the man —**

**they're
still
one of a
kind!**

Join
DON MCGREGOR

in welcoming
new artist

JOSE ORTIZ

beginning in
SABRE no. 10

**The magic
is back.**

"TO SPEAK OF THE DEAD IS TO MAKE THEM
LIVE AGAIN." -- EGYPTIAN BOOK OF THE DEAD

"WHO SHALL DESILE THE TEMPLES OF THE
ANCIENT GODS, A CRUEL AND VIOLENT DEATH
SHALL BE HIS FATE. I FEAR I SHALL NOT SEE THE
SUN RISE AGAIN OVER THE VALLEY OF THE JACKALS."
-- EDUARDO CIANELLI; THE MUMMY'S HAND, 1940

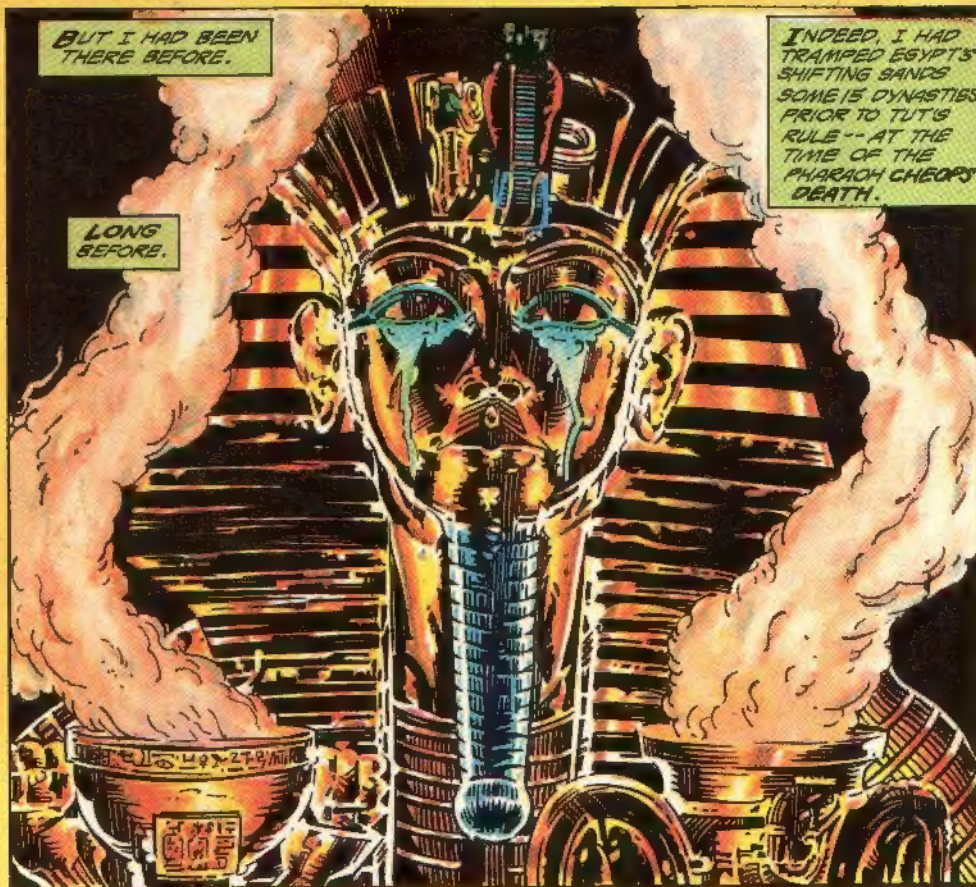
"AT LAST HAVE MADE WONDERFUL DISCOVERY
IN THE VALLEY; A MAGNIFICENT TOMB WITH
SEALS INTACT; RE-COVERED SAME FOR YOUR
ARRIVAL; CONGRATULATIONS." -- CABLE FROM
CARTER TO LORD CARNARVON, 3 NOVEMBER 1922

CARNARVON REACHED LUXOR, AND THE SEALS
WERE BROKEN, ON NOVEMBER 23, THUS
MAKING 1923 THE CELEBRATED YEAR IN WHICH
ANCIENT DEATH WAS REBORN AND PARADED
BEFORE THE LIVING.

BUT I HAD BEEN
THERE BEFORE.

LONG
BEFORE.

INDEED, I HAD
TRAMPED EGYPT'S
SHIFTING SANDS
SOME 15 DYNASTIES
PRIOR TO TUT'S
RULE -- AT THE
TIME OF THE
PHARAOH CHEOPS'
DEATH.



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NECROPOLIS NIGHTS

THERE WAS ANOTHER AIDA, I KNOW, BUT MINE WAS AN EGYPTIAN TOUR GUIDE I'D PLUCKED FROM 1988 AND PLUNKED INTO A CLUMP OF NILE BULLRUSHES CIRCA 2500 B.C.

THERE WAS GOOD REASON FOR THIS.

MY SCRAMBACK DELUDED HER SUBCONSCIOUS INTO PERCEIVING IT ALL AS A DREAM.

CHEOPS (A.K.A. KHUFU) HAD JUST DIED --

-- AND HIS FUNERARY PRIESTS HAD BEEN REPLACED BY SOME OF KROK'S EBONATI DOPPELGANGERS BENT ON TRASHING HISTORY.

THE DARK BOYS BEING DARK, SUCH WAS THEIR USUAL M.O., BUT THIS TIME THE METHOD WAS A CRYPTIC KICKER --

SUCH TEMPORAL INTERFERENCE TENDS TO SIRE PARADOX, AND PARADOX STITCHES GLITCHES IN THE LOOSE SEAMS OF TIME'S METAPHYSICAL INTERSTICES.

-- INVOLVING THEFT, DESTRUCTION, OR ALTERATION OF CHEOPS' SACRED BOOK OF THE DEAD.

TAKE YOUR PICK; I HADN'T FIGURED IT OUT YET.

RESULT: INSTANT CROCODILE OF THE NILE...

... A LIVING SUITCASE PACKED WITH AN UPCHUCKED WALLOP OF TINY RAZOR-FANGED FOXIE-GLITCHES.

CHARGE!

CAZA... ARE YOU SURE THIS IS A DREAM?

SNATCHING UP CHEOPS' PYPHYRUS-SCROLL BOOK OF THE DEAD, ONE OF THE FIVE EBONATI STRUCK FOR THE WEST BANK.

CONSIDER YOURSELF UP TO DATE.

TRAPPED LIKE THIS, THE OPTIONS ARE EXTREMELY PITIFUL AND THE DAMNED DOKIES BITE THE WAY SCORPIONS STING; ONE MELD-PLATED BIG BANG AWARD TO NAPOLEON'S GEEKS FOR SHOOTING THE NOSE OFF THE SPHINX, THE BASTARDS.

OPTION ONE: MY WRISTWATCH SCRAMBACK--BUT IT ERASES ONLY MINOR PARADOXES AND ONLY THOSE OF MY CREATION...WHILE THIS IDIOT SCENE IS A MAJOR PIECE OF EBONATI WORK.

OPTION TWO: MY LUGER--BUT A 20th CENTURY BULLET SLAMMED INTO ANY PIECE OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN LIFE WOULD ONLY CREATE ANOTHER DOKIE-GLITCH AND ONE TOO LARGE FOR MY SCRAMBACK TO NEGATE.

BESIDES, THERE ARE TOO MANY OF THEM TOO SMALL TO SHOOT...

NOT THIS PART, AIDA, NO.

THIS ISN'T JUST A DREAM, IS IT?

THEN, IF WE SURVIVE IT, GAZA...THE BLOOD'S WORTH IT.

SPOKEN LIKE A TRUE ARCHEOLOGIST WITH A DREAM COME TRUE, BUT ONLY 'IF WE SURVIVE IT'--A RUB TO CHAFE ONE RAW.

CLEARLY, I WISH TO SUBJECT NEITHER OF US TO A DEATH OF A THOUSAND PIECES...

...AND EVEN MORE CLEARLY, WITH THE EBONATI ESCAPING--

--THE SITUATION CALLS FOR DRASTIC IMPROVISATION.

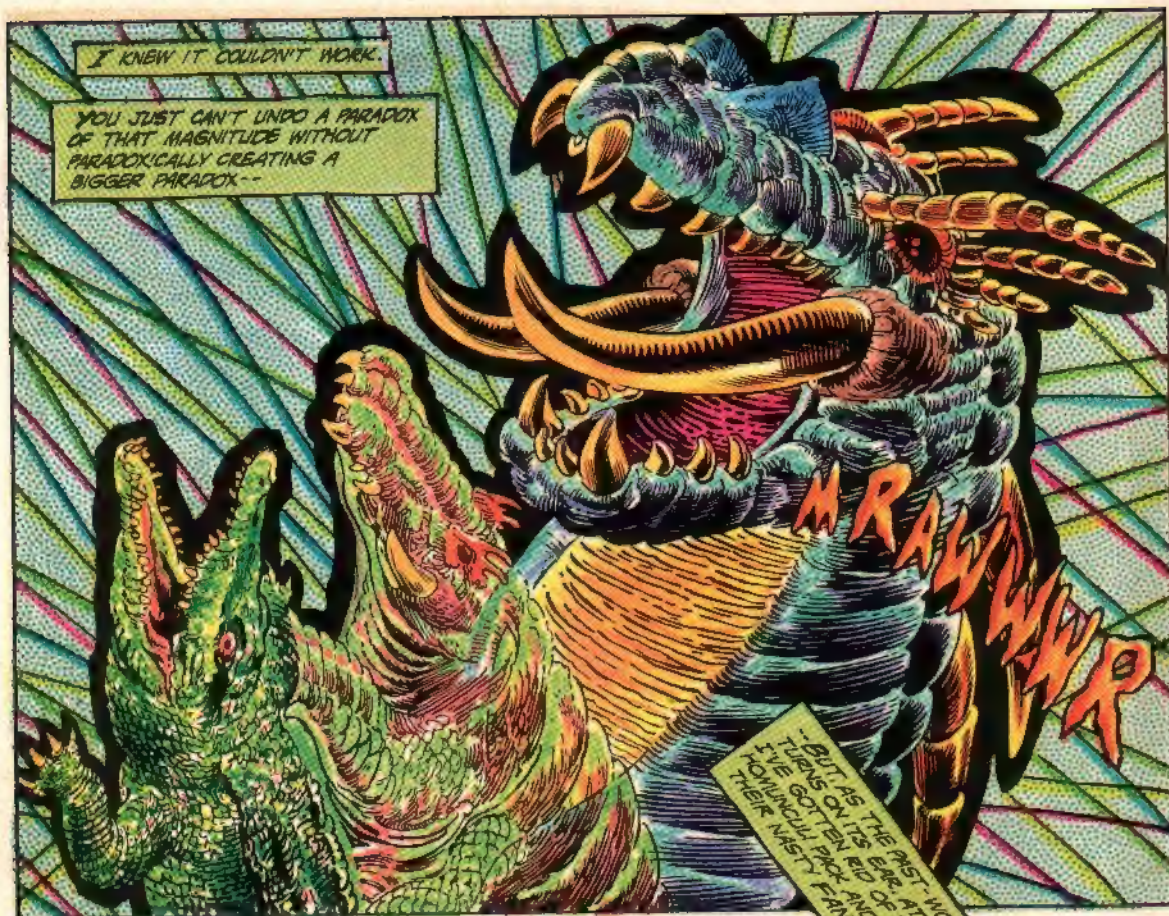
BRAM

ANY OTHER GLITCH COULD HARDLY BE WORSE, SO I PLUG THE SAVAGE SUITCHASE RIGHT BETWEEN THE DEAD DULL EYES.

THEN, WILLING MY SCRAMBACK TO A BRIGHT BUT FUTILE TINGLE--

--I TRY TO IMPOSSIBLY TAKE THE BULLET BACK FROM THE DYING BRAIN.

HOLD ONTO YOUR HEAD, AIDA!

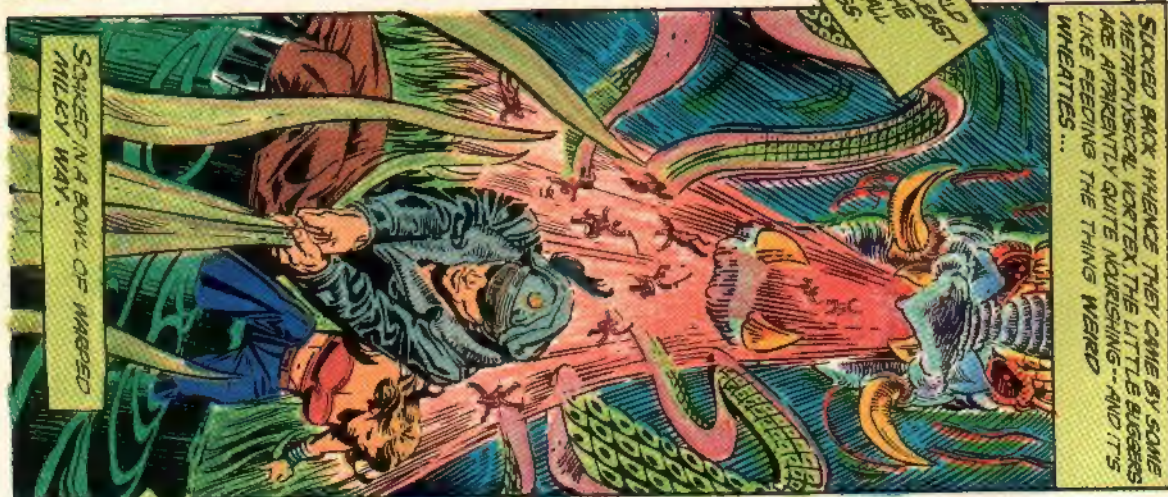


I KNEW IT COULDN'T WORK.

YOU JUST CAN'T UNDO A PARADOX OF THAT MAGNITUDE WITHOUT PARADOXICALLY CREATING A BIGGER PARADOX--

MR. RAWR

--BUT AS THE FIRST-WORLD TURNS ON ITS ERE AT LEAST I'VE GOTTEN RID OF THE KONGULIC PAK AND ALL THEIR NASTY FANGS.



SAVED 'N A BOWL OF MARGED MILKY WAY.

SUCKED BACK INHANCE THEY CAME BY SOME METAPHYSICAL VORTICE, THE LITTLE BIGGERS ARE APPARENTLY QUITE NOURISHING--AND IT'S LIKE FEEDING THE THING WEIRD WHEATIES ...

THIS MUCH IS STILL TRUE: THE GIANT QUATCH IS LOUER THAN GODZILLA WITHOUT HIS MAKEUP.

REAL PRIESTS AND PHONY EBONATI ALIKE FLEE THE FUNERARY BARQUE, TOO SPITLESS TO SCREAM.

I DON'T BLAME THEM; DEALING WITH THE BIZARRE IS MY BUSINESS, AND A THICKENED TONGUE IS PART OF THE PRICE.



AIDA LOVED HER WORK AS A TOUR GUIDE LIP IN 1889 A.D., HAVING ALWAYS FELT TIME-LOST AND CONVINCED SHE BELONGED BACK HERE, AND SHE'D COME ALONG ON MY WILD RIDE HOPING TO QUENCH ONE INCANDESCENT PASSION, TO SOLVE ONE ETERNAL RIDDLE: GIVEN ALL THE TIME, EFFORT, AND MIRACLES OF ENGINEERING EXPENDED ON THE CREATION OF CHEOPS' MAGNIFICENT PYRAMID TOMB, WHY WAS HE NEVER INTERRED IN IT?

THE GREAT PYRAMID OF CHEOPS/KHUFU-- THE ULTIMATE DESTINATION OF THE FUNERARY BARQUE WE WERE LEAVING BEHIND-- WAS ONE OF THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD, YET IT HAD REMAINED EMPTY AND PURPOSELESS. AIDA WANTED TO KNOW WHY... AND NOW SHE WAS LIVING THROUGH THE ANSWER--



--WHOSE PUNCH-LINE WOULD NO DOUBT COME WITH A BANG.

AND HERE'S WHY: AS BIG AS IT'D BECOME, THE FORMER SUITCASE WAS TOO SMALL FOR ITS CONTENTS OF SUCKED-IN NAPOLEON DUDS.



SOMETHING WOULD HAVE TO GIVE... ESPECIALLY SINCE SUITCASES ARE MADE OF ALLIGATOR, NOT CROCODILE.

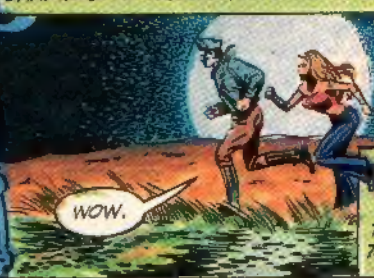
DEATH OF A THOUSAND PIECES INDEED--AND IT SERVED THE NOW-BLOODY BUGGER RIGHT.



BAOUM

RUNNING AFTER THE EBONATI RUNNING FOR THE PYRAMID, WE CATCH A LAST GLIMPSE OF THE NATIVE-TIME PRIESTS, SLAVES, AND WAILING WOMEN, ALL BOGGLED.

SOME GAPE AT CHEOPS' SARCOPHAGUS ON THE BARQUE, OTHERS AT THE PYRAMID WHICH WAS THEIR DEAD KING'S INTENDED TOMB, AND I HARDLY NEED MY VOCABULATOR-EARPIECE TO TRANSLATE WHAT THEY'RE THINKING...

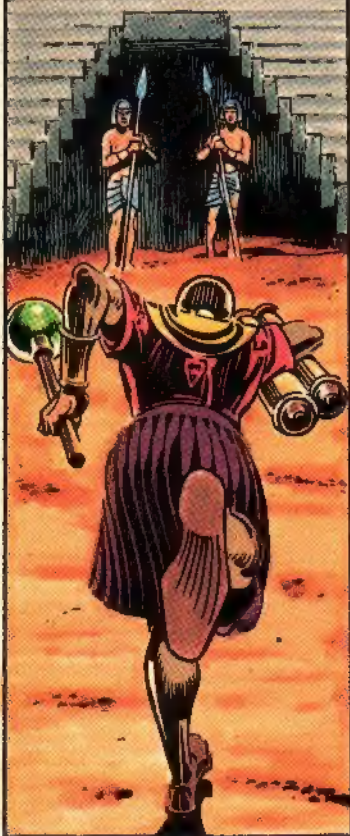


WOW.

NO WAY, JOSÉ--THE GODS ARE MUCHO UPSET--AND LET US THEREFORE FIND A NEW TOMB MUY PRONTO.

THE LOCATION OF THE NEW TOMB WOULD FOREVER REMAIN A MYSTERY, OR AT LEAST UP TO THE 23RD CENTURY WHICH WAS THE LATEST UPDATE I'D SEEN--BUT IF IT EVER WAS FOUND, THE HIEROGLYPHICS ON ITS STELAE WOULD MAKE FOR SOME INTERESTING READING.

MEANWHILE, THERE WERE NOW THREE EBONATI ESCAPEES FROM THE EXPLODED MONSTER WHOSE BITE HAD BEEN AS BIG AS THE BARQUE.



THE FIRST ONE--WITH THE STOLEN BOOK OF THE DEAD--NEARED THE ALREADY-OBSOLETE CENOTAPH...AND SINCE NECROPOLIS GUARDS TYPICALLY STOOD IN FOR LOCKS IN THESE OLDEN TIMES--

--THE EBONATI USED HIS DARKWOOD AS A BRUTAL KEY.



A GOOD THING THEY WOULD'VE BEEN EXECUTED ANYWAY, AS "PUNISHMENT" FOR THE FUNERAL FOUL-UP, OR WE'D HAVE ANOTHER GLITCH IN OUR WAY.



TO THE SHIFT-VEHICLE--QUICKLY!



THEN THE WOMB FACTOR HAD SEEDED THEIR TIME MACHINE IN ROUGHLY THE SAME PLACE IT'D DUMPED OURS--SOMEBODY WITHIN THE GREAT PYRAMID.

INSIDE, IT WAS TOO LATE TO STOP TWO OF THEM, INCLUDING THE BOOK THIEF...



...BUT THE THIRD WAS STILL LURKING...



I NAILED HIM MAKING A DASH FOR THE HATCH...



ASH-H!

OVERCOMPENSATING, THE WORLD FLOPPED THE OTHER WAY JUST FOR AN INSTANT...

HEAR THAT VREEB, EBONATI? THE SOUND OF A SHIFT-VEHICLE HITTING THE MBLD--YOUR FRIENDS HAVE DESERTED YOU.



NOW TELL ME WHERE THEY'VE GONE--OR I'LL PUMP ANOTHER ONE INTO A FATAL SPOT.

**TIMING THE PROMISE
PRECISELY**

AND IF I TELL
YOU, CAZA?

I'LL LET YOU LIVE. NOW
WHAT DID THEY WANT
WITH THE BOOK OF THE
DEAD?

I...I DON'T KNOW--
I ONLY KNOW ITS THEFT
IS INTENDED TO UNRAVEL
THE FABRIC OF THIS
TIMELINE...

YOUR
TIMELINE,
CAZA.

WHERE ARE THEY
GOING WITH THE
BOOK?

NOT FAR
IN SPACE...

I SWEAR I DON'T KNOW! ALL
I KNOW IS THAT KROK HIMSELF
SCULPTED THEM INTO GODS...

...BUT UP
THE LINE SOME
1300 YEARS TO
THE DEATH OF
RAMESES THE
GREAT--WHERE
NIGHTGAUNTS AWAIT.

AND WHAT
ARE THESE NIGHT-
GAUNTS SUPPOSED
TO DO?

...AND THAT THEY...
THEY'RE WAITING TO
RECEIVE CHEOPS' BOOK
OF THE DEAD.

ALL RIGHT--INTO MY VEHICLE--
THROUGH THE SARCOPHAGUS.

WEIRD DREAM,
AIDA?

BUT EXCITING.
CAZA--ARE WE REALLY
GOING TO SEE
RAMESES'
DYNASTY TOO?

BOIT BOIT BOIT

AS SOON
AS I JACK US
INTO THE
MELD--

--AND TOSS OUT
THE GARBAGE.

MAYBE AN
EBONATI TIME-
CRUISER WOULD
PICK HIM UP...

...AND MAYBE
HE'D DRIFT
THROUGH THE
FLUXING GOLD
FOREVER;
IT WAS
UP TO
KROK.

DYNASTY-HOPPING FOR GUN AND PROPHET

EITHER WAY, I'D KEPT MY BARGAIN;
HE WAS ALIVE WHEN JETTISONED
--MINUS, HOWEVER, HIS DARKROD.

NOW, AIDA--
TELL ME
ABOUT
RAMESES.

ONE OF MY
SPECIALTIES,
CAZA.

RAMESES II WAS PHAROAH
DURING THE NINETEENTH DYNASTY--
1320 TO 1200 B.C. --AND HE IS KNOWN
FOR HIS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE CITY
OF KADESH IN SOUTHERN SYRIA,
A VASSAL OF THE HITTITE
EMPIRE...

"THE GREATEST BUILDER OF ALL THE PHAROS, RAMESES RULED FOR 67 YEARS (THE SECOND LONGEST REIGN IN HISTORY) WHILE EGYPT WAS AT ITS PEAK."

HIS FATHER SETI I DIED IN 1290 B.C., AND HE BECAME A WARRIOR-KING WHO FATHERED NEARLY 300 CHILDREN.

IN MODERN TIMES--THE 1970s A.D.--THE ASWAN HIGH DAM CAUSED THE NILE TO FLOOD NUBIA, THREATENING THE TEMPLES OF RAMESES AND NEFERTARI AT ABU-SIMBEL...

OFFERINGS IN HIS TOMB INCLUDED A BOAT FOR HIS SPIRIT'S JOURNEY TO THE AFTERWORLD, A THRONE FROM WHICH TO CONTINUE HIS RULE, MAGICAL FIGURES TO DO HIS SPIRIT'S BIDDING, BOOKS OF THE DEAD WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR AVOIDING THE MANY GODS AND DEMONS WHO WOULD ATTEMPT TO BAR HIS PATH TO THE AFTERLIFE--

YOU DON'T SAY, NOW TELL ME ABOUT THE BOOK OF THE DEAD.

IT'S A MANUAL OF THE EGYPTIAN BELIEF IN REINCARNATION, WHICH EXPLAINS WHY ALL THE TEMPLES WERE ON THE EAST BANK OF THE NILE, WHERE THE SUN IS REBORN EACH MORNING--AND WHY THE NECROPOLIS WITH ALL ITS TOMBS IS ON THE WEST BANK, WHERE THE SUN DIES EACH EVENING.

"THE TEMPLES WERE MOVED PIECE BY PIECE 200 FEET ABOVE THE RISING WATER LINE AND RECONSTRUCTED SO THAT THE SUN STILL STREAMS THROUGH THE ENTRANCE TO BATHE THE INNER STATUES ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF RAMESES' DEATH."

"THOUGH A WARRIOR, RAMESES MADE THE WORLD'S FIRST MAJOR PEACE TREATY, WHICH READS IN PART, 'BEGINNING WITH THIS DAY, IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT GOOD PEACE AND GOOD BROTHERHOOD BETWEEN US FOREVER, HE IS IN PEACE WITH ME AND I AM IN GOOD BROTHERHOOD WITH HIM, AND I AM IN PEACE WITH HIM FOREVER.'"

"HE DIED IN 1234 B.C., AND THE RAMESEUM WAS HIS MORTUARY IN THE THEBAN NECROPOLIS."

"--WHICH WAS THOUGHT TO BE A PLEASANT EXTENSION OF EARTHLY LIFE...AND THERE WERE ALSO PRECIOUS OILS, INCENSE, FOOD OFFERINGS, AND TREASURE APLenty."

"HIS FAVORITE AND MOST BEAUTIFUL WIFE WAS NEFERTARI."

THE DEAD BOOK, REVISED EDITION

"THE STORY OF THE VERY FIRST REINCARNATION, TOLD IN HIEROGLYPHICS, IS CONTAINED IN THE BOOK OF THE DEAD."

"THE PHARAOH OSIRIS--WHOSE WIFE WAS THE BELOVED ISIS--WAS OPPOSED BY HIS BASTARD BROTHER SET."

"THEY FOUGHT--"

"SET SLEW OSIRIS AND TORE HIS BODY INTO FOURTEEN PIECES."

"THE FAITHFUL WIFE AND GREAT MOTHER GODDESS ISIS, HOWEVER, COLLECTED THE DISMEMBERED PIECES AND STITCHED THEM BACK TOGETHER."

"MEANWHILE, THE SON OF ISIS AND OSIRIS--FALCON-HEADED HORUS--AVENGED HIS FATHER BY SLAYING SET."

"JACKAL-HEADED ANUBIS, SENT DOWN BY THE SUN-GOD AMON-RA, EMBALMED THE REASSEMBLED BODY--AS THE SCRIBE THOTH PASSED JUDGMENT IN HIS BOOK OF THE DEAD."

"FINALLY, THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF ISIS, HORUS, THOTH, ANUBIS, AND LIFE-GIVING AMON-RA PRODUCED THE MIRACULOUS RESULT--THE RESURRECTION OF OSIRIS FROM THE DEAD."

"--A FIERCE BATTLE WHICH SHOOK THE VERY WORLD."

EACH PHARAOH THEREAFTER WAS THOUGHT TO BE THE NEWEST REINCARNATION OF OSIRIS --

--AND THE BOOK OF THE DEAD BECAME MORE THAN A MERE LISTING OF SINS AND GOOD WORKS INSCRIBED BY THOTH, DIVINE RECORDER OF THE DEEDS OF MEN, TO BE PRODUCED WHEN THE SOUL CAME TO JUDGMENT.

INDEED, IT BECAME A SORT OF **GUIDEBOOK--OR ROADMAP--** FOR THE PERILOUS JOURNEY TO THE AFTERLIFE.

KEEP TALKING AIDA-- YOU'RE GETTING WARM.

AN INTRODUCTORY HYMN STATES THAT 'MILLIONS OF YEARS HAVE GONE OVER THE WORLD; I CANNOT TELL THE NUMBER OF THOSE THROUGH WHICH THOU HAST PASSED...'

AND THE **REST** OF THE BOOK ENSURES THAT THE JOURNEY THROUGH TIME CONTINUES...

...GUIDING THE SOUL FROM PLANE TO PLANE -- TO THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF THE AFTERLIFE, WHENCE NEW LIFE IS **REBORN**.

'MOST OF THE WARNINGS CONCERN THE DEMON AMNUT, DEVOURER OF THE DEAD, WHOSE FUNCTION WAS TO CONSUME UNWARY SOULS.

"IN THIS WAY WAS THE SEVENTH LEVEL OF THE AFTERWORLD, KINGDOM OF OSIRIS, BLOCKED TO THOSE WHOSE SINS IN LIFE MADE THEM UNWORTHY."

AIDA, YOU'LL MAKE AN ACE ARCHEOLOGIST SOMEDAY -- BUT HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT REINCARNATION?

INTELLECTUALLY, CAZA, I FEEL NOTHING ...

... BUT DEEP IN MY HEART... I HAVE ALWAYS FELT THAT I ONCE BREATHED THE AIR OF AN ANCIENT PAST.

AMEN, AMON -- AND SHE'LL BREATHE IT AGAIN IN LESS THAN A TRICE.

WELL, IT'S FUNNY, AIDA... YOU LOOK NOTHING LIKE HER... BUT YOU DO REMIND ME VERY MUCH OF SOMEONE I KNOW FROM THE PAST...

OH?

YES... SHE...

BUT I FALL SILENT IN MEMORY'S SHADOW... RECALLING SOMETHING ELSE WHICH REMINDED ME OF BRIDGET...

THE FUNERAL PROCESSION ON THE NILE -- AND I WONDER FOR THE THOUSANDTH TIME IF SHE STILL LIVES...

--SO IF MY REMOVAL FROM MY NATIVE-TIME OF 1940 CAUSED NO PARADOX-GLITCH, AT LEAST ACCORDING TO **TEMPUS** FUGIT--

-- THEN WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

THAT I WOULD HAVE BEEN **UTTERLY INSIGNIFICANT**--WITH NO EFFECT OR IMPACT ON ANYONE OR ANYTHING--HAD I **CONTINUED** MY NORMAL LIFE."

OR DOES IT MEAN THAT, HAD I REMAINED IN 1940, I WOULD HAVE **DIED ALMOST IMMEDIA**--

AW, SHOVE IT UP YOUR **CLOCK, BUSTER**.

RIGHT NOW I CAN'T EVEN FIGURE OUT IF I'M **S'POSED** TO HEAR YOU.

PONDERING TIMES

THE TEST AT HAND APPARENTLY CONSISTED OF TWO PHASES AND I'D FAILED PHASE ONE...

YET THE THEFT OF CHEOPS' GUIDEBOOK HAD NOT CAUSED CATASTROPHIC DAMAGE--A MAJOR DONE-GLITCH, YES, BUT NOTHING TO UNRAVEL THE FABRIC'S MASTER THREADS.

AND SINCE IT EXPLAINED WHY CHEOPS WAS NOT INTERRED IN HIS PYRAMID, THE OCCURRENCE HAD APPARENTLY BEEN ABSORBED INTO THE TIMESTREAM AS NOTHING MORE SEVERE THAN A MYSTERY OF ANTIQUITY...

BRINGING US TO PHASE TWO, WHERE I WAS SURE I'D BETTER SUCCEED. 'NIGHTGAUNTS' SCULPTED INTO GODS--AND EGYPTIAN GODS. NO DOUBT...

AIDA CLAIMED RAMESES II WAS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PHARAOH OF EGYPT'S PEAK EPOCH--AND IF THE DARK BOYS WERE TAKING CHEOPS' BOOK OF THE DEAD TO THE TIME OF RAMESES' DEATH...



...MEANING MY FAILURE WAS NOT THE END OF THE WORLD AND THE GAME WAS STILL AFOOT.



THIS WAY AIDA-- TIME TO GET SUITED.



AIDA WAS THE BOOK OF THE DEAD ALWAYS THE SAME?



OR WAS IT TAILORED FOR EACH PHARAOH?

TA LORED, I'D SAY NO--

JUST LOOK AT THIS 16TH CENTURY FROCK!

SO THE BOOK AT THE TIME OF CHEOPS WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE BOOK AT THE TIME OF RAMESES?

--BUT IT DID CHANGE, CAZA. AS THE BELIEFS CHANGED.

CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT.

THAT WAS IT, THEN. BOGGLING AS IT WAS. BUT IT FIT--KROK AND SHAKREEN HAVE ALWAYS BEEN BIG ON METAPHYSICS AND THE OCCULT...

YET...COULD THEY ACTUALLY BELIEVE IN ALL OF IT?

WE'LL BE ABLE TO PASS IN THESE DADS. AIDA-- YOU CAN CHANGE IN THE CLOSET.

EVEN MORE BOGGLING: COULD IT BE A VIABLE, WORKABLE FORCE IN THEIR TIMELINE? NO WAY OF KNOWING AT THIS POINT, BUT I WAS CERTAIN I NOW KNEW THE NATURE OF THE EBONATI'S EGYPTIAN GAMBIT...

THEY PLANNED TO SWITCH THE TWO DEAD BOOKS, SUBSTITUTING RAMESES' BOOK WITH CHEOPS' OUTDATED EDITION!

BUT DID KROK BELIEVE THIS TAMPERING WITH TIME WOULD SUFFICIENTLY VIOLATE HISTORY TO ACHIEVE HIS AIM-- NAMELY THE IMPLSION OF MY TIMELINE?

OR DID HE TAKE EGYPTIAN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AS LITERAL FACT HOPING THE HISTORICAL DAMAGE WOULD BE WROUGHT WHEN RAMESES' SPIRIT, USING THE WRONG GUIDEBOOK--

-- GETS LOST SOMEWHERE BETWEEN HIS TOMBS AND THE SEVENTH REGION OF THE AFTERWORLD?

AND WHAT IF KROK WAS RIGHT TO BELIEVE IN SUCH JUMBO-JUMBO? WHAT IF RAMESES' LIMBO-TRAPPED SPIRIT HAUNTED SOME FUTURE PHARAOH INTO MADNESS--

--CAUSING HIM TO PLUNGE INTO A DEMENTED WAR WHICH WOULD PLUNGE OUT THE LIGHTS OF BURGEONING CIVILIZATION?

I DON'T KNOW THE ANSWERS, EVEN IF THEY COULD BE KNOWN I WASN'T SURE I WANTED THEM.

YOU LOOK GORGEOUS, AIDA.

I FEEL LIKE ONE OF NEPERTARIS' HAND-MAIDENS...OR EVEN THE QUEEN HERSELF.

AS I'VE SAID: FRANKLY, I GUESS A LOT... AND THE GUESSING HAS THUS FAR SERVED ME IN GOOD STEAD. WERE I TO TRULY UNDERSTAND ALL THE WORKINGS OF TIME AND PARADOX, IN THE COSMIC SENSE, I SUSPECT TOO MANY NEURAL FUSES WOULD BE BLOWN FOR ME TO SUMMON EVEN A WEAK GUESS. THANK THE ORACLE I AT LEAST HAD THIS EBONATI SHIFT-VEHICLE TO SEARCH FOR CERTAINITIES. THANK THE ORACLE... AND KROK'S WIFE SHAKREEN.

OUT-OF-TIME I: THE DEATH OF NINE MONTHS' LAST MOMENT MEANS BIRTH

BREATH... COMING HARD NOW...

...BUT IF THE BABY IS BORN HERE N LIMBO IT WILL EXIST ONLY AS A "SHADOW" IN ANY AND ALL "REALITIES"

MUST ESCAPE MY HUSBAND... BEFORE HE LEARNS I'VE GONE INTO LABOR.

MUST USE THE SHIFT-VEHICLE HIDDEN AWAY IN THE --

-- CLOSET.

IT'S... EMPTY!

I...I FORGOT-- I GAVE THE VEHICLE TO CAZA, ENABLING HIM TO ESCAPE!

GOT TO.. FIND SOME OTHER WAY...

I... I'M RUNNING OUT OF... TIME!

RAM THESE, GREAT EBONATI

WE ARRIVED.

OKAY, AIDA-- GO.

BOIT BOIT

WE EMERGED INTO AIR CLEAN, COOL, AND CRISP.

...BUT AS USUAL, THE 'GO-BLE TIME-TRAVEL SICKNESS SERVED TO DISORIENT US...

THEBAN TEMPTATIONS

YET THE QUEERNESS ONLY HEIGHTENS THE AWE, AS TIME ITSELF BEGINS RUBBING OFF ON ME...

WH-WHERE?

THEBES-- THE GREEK POET HOMER CALLED IT "THE CITY OF A HUNDRED GATES, WHERE 400 HEROES WITH THEIR HORSES AND CHARIOTS PASS THROUGH EACH GREAT GATE."

MORE RECENTLY, SHELLEY NAMED IT "OZYMANDIAS," WHOSE PHAROAH HE CALLED "THE KING OF KINGS."

IT'S THE CAPITAL OF UPPER EGYPT, CAZA WHOSE TOTEM IS THE VULTURE-- WHILE LOWER EGYPT IS RULED BY THE COBRA.

I KNOW NOT WHAT TO MAKE OF A CIVILIZATION WHOSE UNIFORMITY IS PROTECTED BY SOUVENGER AND VIPER-- BUT AIDA IS CLEARLY IN SEVENTH HEAVEN.

MADE SILVER BY THE MOONLIGHT, STIPPLES OF GOOSEBUMPS TRACE HER SKIN WITH THOUSANDS OF DELICATE THRILLS, GRASSING HER FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT, MEETING AT THE MEMBRANE DIVIDING WHAT SHE IS AND WHAT SHE WISHES TO BE.

IF ONLY I COULD STAY HERE FOREVER, CAZA-- NEVER AWAKEN FROM THIS BEAUTIFUL DREAM...

WELL, AT LEAST IT WILL BE A LITTLE WHILE... BEFORE I MUST PINCH HER.

AS IN A DREAM, INDEED WE WALK THESE NEW STREETS OF ANTIQUITY FOR AN HOUR, BEFORE OUR SEARCH RESULTS IN--

-- DON'T LIKE USING NIGHTSAUNTS AND I NEVER HAVE! ANYTHING WE SHADOW-KNIGHTS CAN'T DO--

GET BACK, AIDA-- INTO THE SHADOWS!

NINE-CROCODILE DOES LIKE JENNG THEM-- HE CREATED THEM-- THEY'RE HIS PETS.

BUT WHY CAN'T WE SIMPLY KILL WHOEVER STANDS IN THE WAY OF THE SUBSTITUTION?

THE TWO EBONATI WHO ESCAPED CHEOPS' FUNERARY BARQUE.

BECAUSE MURDER OF NATIVE-TIMERS CREATES NOTHING MORE THAN ANOTHER TIME-SQUINK--AND WOULD JEOPARDIZE OUR OBJECTIVE, WHICH IS FAR MORE HEAVILY THAN A MERE SQUINK.

"TIME-SQUINK" MUST BE EBONATI GLANS FOR "DOXIE-GLITCH."

BESIDES, WE DON'T KNOW WHERE RAMESES' BOOK OF THE DEAD IS LOCATED--NOR EVEN WHERE HIS TOMB IS LOCATED IN THIS TIMESTREAM. WE NEED THE COOPERATION OF THE REAL PRIESTS AS WELL AS THE NECROPOLIS GUARDS...

...NOT THEIR DEATHS.

BUT I STILL SAY WE'RE GOOD ENOUGH TO--

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN, KARIECE?

WE ARE NOW BUT TWO, THANKS TO CAZA. WHERE ONCE WE WERE FIVE

YES BUT EVEN TWO ELITE EBONATI SHADOW-KNIGHTS ARE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO--

BY THE ORACLE...

THE MOYIS FACTOR HAS SEEPED GODS IN THE POLY-TIME

WE HAVE BEEN SENT BY NINE-CROCODILE TO ASSIST YOU IN GAINING THE CONFIDENCE OF THIS MUIEUS PRIEST'S.

BOLT!

ONE LOOK AT OUR NEWLY SCULPTED FORMS & ALL THAT WILL BE REQUIRED.

THIS MAY BE THE SOUTHERN CAPITAL, BUT THE NIGHTSAUNT IS HARDLY WHISTLING DIXIE...NOR EVEN DOXIE...AND--

TANA GETCHA FIVE...

YE GODS--ARE THEY ACTUALLY DRINKING BOILED TANA LEAVES--?

COME--THE BLACK BREW HAS FORTIFIED US-- WE ARE READY TO ACT.

WE HAVE AN ADVANTAGE OF TIME, AIDA-- PROVIDED YOU KNOW WHERE RAMESES' TOMB IS.

THE RAMESSEUM MORTUARY-- CARVED INTO THE WESTERN PEAK, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE NILE.

THEN LET'S GO PLAY ARCHEOLOGISTS OF THE NEW.

NO-- JUST THE USUAL NIGHTSAUNT NUTRIENTS NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN THEIR LIVES ANYWHERE BEYOND THE LIMBO OF FIVE-WORLDS.

WITH RAMESES SO RECENTLY DEAD, THERE'LL BE CHANCE...

AIN'T THERE REMAINS.

OUT-OF-TIME 2: MY BABY'S LEAVING ME (ADRIET ON A CITY-SHIP AT THE LIQUID CORE)

MUST FIND...
ANOTHER SHIFT-VEHICLE...
ESCAPE THIS LIMBO OF
FIVE-WORLDS..

THERE..

MUST HOLD
OUT... A LITTLE
LONGER...

CONTRACTIONS...
COMING FASTER NOW... BUT
I'M GOING TO MAKE IT..

I'M
GOING
TO--

NO..

NOT
NOW--..

PLEASE.. MY
BABY.. LET ME GO,
NIGHTGAUNT--I
ORDER YOU TO
LET ME GO..

HOLD
HER FAST,
NIGHTGAUNT..

YOU WOULD
STEAL FROM ME,
SHAKREEN...

.. MY MOST
PRECIOUS
POSSESSION...

.. BEFORE
IT EVEN
EXISTS.

NO.. THE
BABY IS
NOT--

DRAW HER BACK
TO OUR DWELLING,
NIGHTGAUNT--NOW..

BUT..
THE CH-CHILD..

WILL BE
BORN HERE--

-- AND WILL
BE MINE..

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

HUNTING PARADOX

HAVING SWUM THE NILE WEST FROM THEBES, WE RISE TO FACE THE VALLEY OF KINGS WITH ITS LABYRINTHINE SYSTEM OF TOMBS AND TUNNELS CARVED INTO THE WESTERN PEAK.

IT IS EERIE.

JACKALS BAY IN THE DISTANCE

AND THERE ARE GUARDS.

INDEED.

HALT! ANYONE ON THIS SHORE AFTER THE SUN HAS DIED IS CONSIDERED A TOMB ROBBER.

WE WOULD HAVE TO SIMPLY BARGE IN, LEST WE LOSE OUR ADVANTAGE OF TIME.

HOLDING THE EBONATI DARKROD HIGH, I LET THE ARROWS FLY...

...BUT WE DO NOT DIE

CAZA! H-HOW ON EARTH--?!

I HAVE YET TO SLAY A NATIVE-TIMER

BRIDGET WILL BE THE FIRST.

SO I MERELY STUN THE GUARDS

AFTER YOU, AIDA.

THE RAMESSEUM'S ENTRANCE IS NOT YET BLOCKED--

--NOR DOES IT BEAR THE NECROPOLIS SEAL OF A RECLUMBENT JACKAL OVER NINE BOUND CAPTIVES, SYMBOL OF THE GODDESS HATHOR.

SO WE DEFILE IT

TIME-OUT 2: HOW MANY OTHER TIMES?

ABOUT ACE, HEAD...WERE THERE ANY OTHERS? **WOMEN**, I MEAN.

YES...ONE IN HIS NATIVE 23RD CENTURY...AND SEVERAL OTHERS, SPRINKLED THROUGHOUT TIME.

LOVE IS CAZA'S WEAKNESS.

WAS THERE ONE... IN **PARTICULAR**?

WHA... REALLY WISH ACE KEPT A SUPPLY OF JUICY **FRUIT** ABOARD.

THERE WAS... **SHAKREEN**.

IT ENDED TRAGICALLY, FOR BOTH OF THEM.

SO... WHAT HAPPENED TO THIS **SHAKREEN**?

SHE...WENT BACK TO HER HUSBAND... TO NOTHING...AND NOWHEN.

FROM KARNAK INCARNATE

-- AND IN THIS TEMPLE TO YOUR GLORY, I PRAY FOR RAMESES' SPIRIT, GREAT AMON-RA, AS I ALSO PRAY TO THE FAVORED GODS HORUS, ANUBIS, THOTH, SEBEK--

AND **BAST**.

O LORDS-- C-CAN IT TRULY BE?

D-DO YOU TRULY WALK THE **MORTAL NIGHT** OF OUR SUFFERING?

HAS RAMESES' DEATH TRULY FAVORED ME WITH THY **PRESENCE**?

RISE, PRIEST, AND OBEY YOUR GODS.

IN THE COMPANY OF THESE-- YOUR TWO **FELLOW** PRIESTS FROM THE **PAST**--

--TAKE US TO THE **TOMB** OF RAMESES.

THE GOLDEN MELD PALES

CONSIDER THE
CARTER HAD NOTHING
ON US, AS WE MOVE
THROUGH A MADDEN-
ING GAUNTLET OF
DARKNESS FROM ONE
POCKET OF WONDER
TO ANOTHER, EACH
SURPASSING THE
LAST.

ALREADY WE
HAVE SEEN
GOLD ENOUGH
TO TURN
MIDAS GREEN.

AND YET THE TRUE
MIDAS LIKE STILL LIES
IN THE INNER BURIAL
CHAMBER ITSELF

WE ARE WITNESS, CAZA,
TO THE MOST FABULOUS
TREASURE COLLECTED
SINCE THE SUN GOD RA
WAS BORN FROM THE
BLOOMING LOTUS PETALS
ON THE SEA OF ETERNITY...

AND THE EFFORT,
AIDA--THE INTRICATE-
LY CONTRIVED BEAUTY
--ALL SOON TO BE
CONSIDERED TO
PERPETUAL
DARKNESS...

HUTON KRAMER
WROTE OF TUTANKH-
AMUN'S MORTUARY:
"THE BEAUTY IS
BREATHTAKING..."

"WE LOOK, WE ADMIRE, AND WE ARE
FINALLY STAGGERED AT THE THOUGHT
THAT SO MUCH THAT IS SO INSPIRED WAS
INTENDED NEVER AGAIN TO BE SEEN ONCE
ITS PURPOSE HAD BEEN FULFILLED."

BUT YOU AND KRAMER OVERLOOK
THE TRUE PURPOSE, CAZA, AND YOU
ARE BLIND TO THE BELIEFS WHICH
INSPIRED IT...

...THAT THE
PHARAOH, LIKE ALL
MEN, WOULD BE REBORN,
TO SEE THIS BEAUTY
WITH FRESH EYES
AND FILLED WITH NEW
PURPOSE.

THE BURIAL
CHAMBER IS
MORE THAN
STUNNING.

IT IS AN ARCHEOLOGICAL BUT BRAND-NEW AND BRILLIANT FANTASIA OF GREEN FELDSPAR, CARNELIAN,
TURQUOISE, GOLD AND SILVER ALABASTER, LAPIS LAZULI, OBSIDIAN, FAIENCE, TRANSLUCENT CALCITE,
NEPHRITE, CHALCEDONY...

AND YOUR
EYES AIDA--IF
YOU'RE NOT
BLIND WHAT DO
THEY SEE?

ENOUGH
SOULFUL BEAUTY--
IF NOT THE PRESENCE
OF AN ACTUAL SOUL
TO MAKE ME WEER

AND WHEN I GAZE
UPON THESE WORKS OF
MY ANCESTORS SOME-
THING PROFOUND CALLS TO ME
ACROSS THE AGES--IN A VOICE
TRUER THAN YOURS HERE AND NOW.

IF I DID NOT LIVE WHEN ALL OF THIS WAS BORN,
THEN DEATH IS LESS THAN THE DREAM I HAVE
ALWAYS IMAGINED.

STRANGER
THINGS WERE
POSSIBLE, AFTER
ALL SHE IS
LIVING IN THAT
TIME RIGHT N--

--CANNOT UNDER-
STAND THE ABSENCE OF
GUARDS, O LORDS--A
HIGHLY UNUSUAL
NIGHT.

I DO UNDERSTAND IT; THEY'D OBVIOUSLY REVIVED
AND WERE SEARCHING ELSEWHERE IN THE TOMB
RIGHT NOW--AS OUR ADVANTAGE OF TIME GOES
RIGHT OUT THE WINDOW.

IT IS
FORTUNATE YOU
CAME WHEN YOU
DID, O LORDS--

--FOR WE PLANNED TO SEAL
GREAT RAMESSES' TOMB WITH
THE BIRTH OF TOMORROW'S SUN,
THAT HE MIGHT BEGIN HIS
JOURNEY TO NEW
LIFE...

OUT-OF-TIME 3: PERIOD

...UHN...
...AAAHHH!

WE CAME WHEN NECESSARY, PRIEST, BEARING KNOWLEDGE TO BE
INCORPORATED IN YOUR PHARAOH'S BOOK OF THE DEAD--

--LEST HE
FALL PREY TO
AMMUT'S NEW
WILES BEFORE
HIS JOURNEY
TO THE
SEVENTH
LEVEL IS
COMPLETED.

PRETTY NIFTY, THE NIGHTGAUNT
POSING AS THE SCRIBE THOTH WANTED
TO DO A REWRITE, MEANING KROK DID
BELIEVE ALL THIS JAZZ--BUT THEN, SO
DID AIDA, HALFWAY...

TWO STRANGERS WITH
MAGICAL POWERS
HAVE--

NEVER MIND THAT!
SURROUND THE TOMB AND
LET NO ONE ENTER!

WH-WHAT? THE
GODS--?

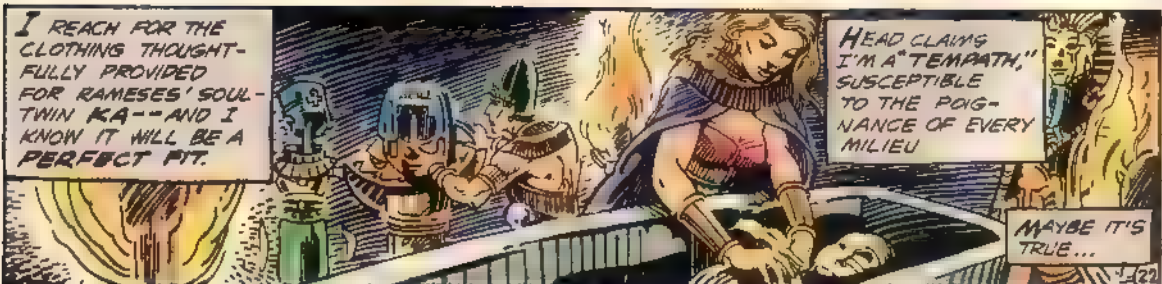
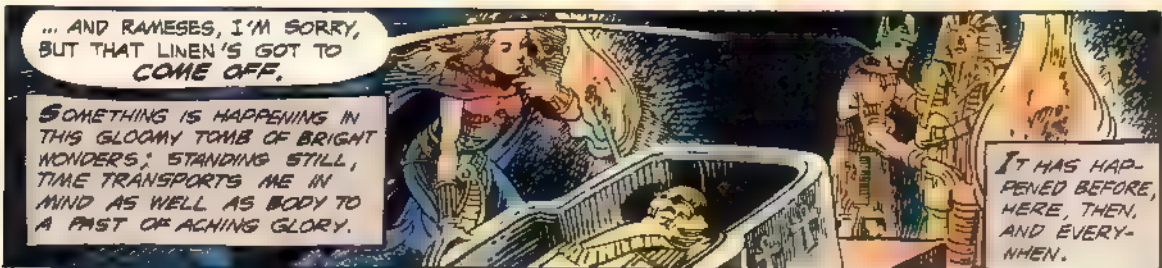
Y-YES,
O LORDS!

YOU MAY ALSO
LEAVE, PRIEST--WHAT
MUST NOW TRANSPIRE
IS NOT MEANT FOR
MORTAL EYES.

AS YOU
BID GREAT
ANUBIS.

SOME REWRITE, THE SUBSTITUTION
OF SCROLLS IS MORE LIKE
PLAGIARISM--YET EVEN WITH
LUBER AND PARKROD, THERE
ARE TOO MANY TO JUMP...

WE MUST BIDE OUR TIME, AND
CONTRIVE A RISKIER GAMBIT.



... BECAUSE WHEN ALL IS DONE, I ALMOST BECOME MY INTENDED POSE, MORE THAN HALF OF MY MIND CONVINCED BY THE REALITY OF MY OWN LIVING-DEAD DECEPTION.

IN NEW SPLENDOR, AIDA CLAIMED SHE'D STUDIED THE RAMESSEUM AND KNEW ABOUT "THE SECRET WAY OUT."

EVEN THOUGH I WILL PLAY MY PART TO THE HILT, I HOPE SHE IS RIGHT.

MUMMY M.I.A.

IT... IT'S GOING F--FOR A WALK!

I WONDERED WHAT THE OTHER GUARDS WOULD THINK-- IF I DIDN'T FIND THEM FIRST-- WHEN THEY DISCOVERED THEIR DEAD KING MISSING IN ACTION.

DRAWING ONE FOOT, I SHAMBLE OUT INTO MOON-LIGHT.

YAAAAHHH

RAMESSES-- OUR KING-- RISEN FROM THE DEAD.

IT IS NOT RAMESSES!

ANYONE CAN BIND HIMSELF IN STRIPS OF LINEN! IT IS A TOMB ROBBER DECEIVING HIS WAY TO ESCAPE!

SLAY HIM!

SO IT WOULD BE A QUESTION OF LOYALTIES BETWEEN THEIR GODS AND THEIR KING-- BUT IF I COULD CONVINCE THEM THAT I WAS RAMESSES...

... THEN I WOULD BE CONSIDERED A GOD AS WELL-- AND NOTHING LESS THAN THE REINCARNATION OF OSIRIS HIMSELF, GOD OF ALL LESSER GODS...

... WHICH IS WHY I NEED AIDA TO BUY MORE TIME...

STOP!!

I'LL NEED HER

QUEEN FOR A NIGHT

LAY NOT A HAND ON MY HUSBAND AND THE FATHER OF MY CHILDREN!

NEFERTARI-- DEAD FOR TWENTY YEARS.

INDEED-- AND THEY CAN SEE THAT SHE IS NO MUMMY IN GAUZE DISGUISE...

GOOD GIRL, AIDA.

I AM RAMESSES-- AND I AM ANGERED THAT MY JOURNEY HAS BEEN INTERRUPTED AND NEARLY SPOILED! THIS BOOK OF THE DEAD HAS BEEN TAMPERED WITH! IT IS FALSE!

451° F.

AND IT MUST BE
DESTROYED!!

FHWOOM!

THICK
GAUZE INSU-
LATES MY HAND
AS I SQUEEZE A
BUTTON ON THE
DARKROD TUCKED
INSIDE THE SCROLL...

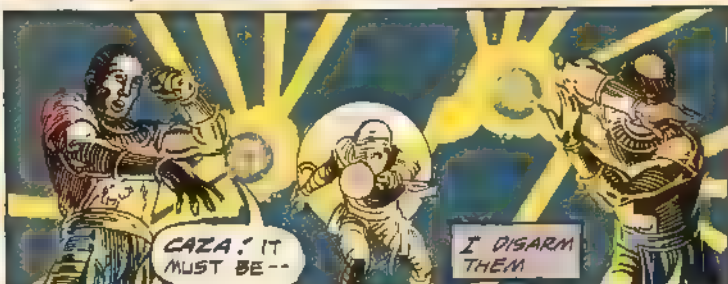
THE PARCH-
MENT IGNITES..

.. FLARES
LURIDLY...

... AND FALLS AWAY IN
FLAMING TATTERS.

ART
CLARKE
WAS RIGHT,
IT LOOKS
JUST LIKE
MAGIC...

...BUT IF THE NATIVE-TIME PRIESTS AND GUARDS ARE
CONVINCED, THE EBONATI HAVE SEEN QUITE ENOUGH.



CAZA: IT
MUST BE--

I DISARM
THEM

KILL THE
IMPOSTOR!
I COMMAND
YOU!

IF YOU ARE TRUE GODS, YOU
MUST KNOW WE CANNOT INTER-
FERE WITH RAMESES' JOURNEY.

FOOLS! NO SUCH
JOURNEY WAS EVER CONDUCTED
LIKE THIS!

I AM DEAD, EGYPT, DEAD

MY NORMAL
JOURNEY HAS
BEEN DEFILED--
BY DEMONS OF
DARK DEATH
POSING AS
GODS COME
TO LIFE!

I HAVE
RETURNED
FROM THE
AFTERWORLD
TO WALK THE
VALLEY OF
KINGS ONE
LAST TIME--
TO RID YOU
OF THESE
DEMONS!

YOU
WANT
PROOF?
THEN
HERE--

THE CANOPIC JAR
SHATTERS, SPILLING
REDNESS.

BUKSH!

MY HEART
ITSELF!

AND NOW... THE FINAL PROOF...



RAMESES SHALL BE REVEALED BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES.



TIGHTLY WRAPPED IN DEATH, I YET LIVE, AND SO I SHED THE GAUZE-BINDING GIFTS OF AMULETS AND FETISHES WHICH ARE NOT MINE TO KEEP--

-- EVEN AS I SPIN MY COCOON IN REVERSE... AND WHEN THE BACKWARD JOURNEY FROM DEATH IS COMPLETED --



-- WHEN THE TRUE HEART OF THE SHROUD IS BARED AND STILL BEATING, I STAND ABOVE A SHOWERED HEAP OF REJECTED TREASURE.

I AM RAMESES THE GREAT REBORN, RETURNED FROM THE VALE OF THE AFTERLIFE AND THE DEPTHS OF THE UNDERWORLD...



IN ANCIENT EGYPT, SUCH IS THE SURRENDERED PRICE OF LIFE.



... IN A TRIUMPH OF UNDYING FLESH.



O FAIR PHARAOH

THE FALSE GODS ARE AGENTS OF CROCODILE-HEADED AMHUT -- SENT TO LAY A TRAP FOR ME, THAT MY SPIRIT MIGHT BE DEVOURD BY THEIR MASTER.



THEY HAVE STOLEN MY TRUE BOOK OF THE DEAD...

RECOVER IT AND RETURN IT TO MY TOMB -- THEN SLAY THE DEMONS.

A COMMAND PERFORMANCE, BUT HARDLY ACTUAL MURDER... SINCE NIGHT-GAUNTS NEVER TRULY LIVE.



AND NOW, MY QUEEN NEFERTARI WOULD ACCOMPANY ME ON A LAST WALK THROUGH THE STREETS OF THESES -- BEFORE WE RESUME OUR JOURNEY TO THE KINGDOM OF OSIRIS.

WITH REGAL STRIDE, WE LEAVE FOR THE SHIFT-VEHICLE.

TIME-OUT 3: INTO THE WILD GOLD ETHER

DER LOVE-JUICE IS VISCIOUS,
MY RAVISHING RECEPTACLE.

LOVE-JUICE,
HEAD?

LOVE-JUICE OR BIRTH-
JUICE--THAT IS THE ETERNAL
QUESTION, IS IT NOT? --
SPAWNING SO MUCH DOUBT
AND GUILT...

ANYWAY, IT IS SIMPLY MY
NICKNAME FOR DER SLUS-
SLIME--WHICH HAS
THAWED.

WE CAN
LEAVE
NOW.

HOOKAY, I GUESS...
BUT I SURE AIN'T
SURE.

IN FACT, I
FEEL KINDA
DEAD.

SCARS OF THE DOME-FANGS, CIRCA 1989

MISS RAMAN?
THE THIRTY
MINUTES ARE
UP...

EH?

WE'VE TAKEN ALL THE PICTURES
WE NEED, MISS RAMAN--OR MAY WE
CALL YOU AIDA? --ALTHOUGH I DARE
SAY NO PHOTO COULD DO THIS
IMMORTAL SITE JUSTICE.

SHALL WE
RETURN TO THE
TOUR BUS
NOW?

IF
YOU'RE ALL
RIGHT, THAT
IS...

AH...
YES...

I GUESS I... I
MUST HAVE BEEN...
DAYDREAMING.

GOOD--
I'VE GIVEN
HER THE
MOST
TREASURED
GIFT OF
ALL...

...ONE WHOSE
REALITY CAN
NEVER BE
TOUCHED.

BUT WHAT WILL SHE THINK,
I WONDER, WHEN SHE DIS-
COVERS THE SMALL SCARS OF
HER ENCOUNTER WITH
FANGED WEIRDNESS IN
THE BULLRUSHES?

IT IS TIME TO
RE-ENTER THE
MELD AND START
SEARCHING FOR
THE A.C.E.'S
TELLTALE TRAIL
OF SLUG-SLINE...

A POOR HOPE ON WHICH
TO HANG MY HAT, BUT THE
ONLY WAY TO FIND
BRIDGET AND HEAD IF
THEY'RE NOT BACK AT
MONTEZUMA CON-
TERMINOUS...

AND I MUST FIND BRIDGET...
FOR IF SHE IS EVER TO LIVE
HER NEW LIFE AT MY SIDE,
HOWEVER BRIEFLY, I MUST
MURDER HER.

OUT-OF-TIME 5:
UNCERTAIN SEED

GET AWAY
FROM HIM, NINE-
CROCODILE

HE'S NOT
YOURS.

HE'LL
NEVER BE
YOURS.

IT IS
TOO LATE,
SHAKREEN.

YOU RAN
OUT OF
TIME.

HE IS DEATH
IN LIFE --

--LIVING DEATH.

HE IS BEYOND
TIME ITSELF.

HE ALREADY
IS MINE.

THE SOUR CHUCKLE OF
TIME'S FINAL GIFT

ANOTHER SOUVENIR FOR MY
ANACHRONY DEN OF
INFINITY, AND A FABULOUS
ANTIQUE INDEED...

...BUT WILL I
EVER SHARE IT
WITH MY REAL
"QUEEN" SHE WHO
ONCE DESCRIBED
ANTIQUES AS NO-
THING MORE THAN
SECOND-HAND
JUNK WITHOUT
MEMORIES ?

AND TELL ME, RAMESES,
I REALLY WANT TO KNOW
WHY HAVE YOU GIVEN ME
SUCH A POOR GIFT, ONE
WHICH MUST BE
TOUCHED TO BE
APPRECIATED ?

THE ANSWER: TIME IS
LITTERED WITH ITS
MANY LITTLE JOSES...
OR SHOULD ONE
GULLIBLY BELIEVE
IT IS ONLY COIN-
CIDENCE THAT
THE EGYPTIAN
GOD OF ETERNITY
IS NAMED HEH ?

HEH.

HEH HEH
HEH.

"IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THERE WAS, IN EFFECT, 'ANOTHER RAMESES,' FOR IN A HIEROGLYPHIC RELIEF AT KARNAK THE FIGURE OF A KING WHOSE NAME IS NO LONGER KNOWN WAS INSERTED INTO THE SCENE AFTER IT HAD BEEN COMPLETED, BUT THE FIGURE WAS LATER ERASED AND THE FAMILIAR IMAGE OF RAMESES SUBSTITUTED FOR IT. WHAT LAY BEHIND THESE EVENTS IS NOT KNOWN..." ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, 23RD EDITION

NEXT: THE TIME-TRIPPED TRICERATOPS OF THE 1939 WORLD'S FAIR...

Notes from SURE CITY

by Jan & Dean Mullaney

THE LATEST CONVENTION UPDATE:

Those of you who either live in the Houston area or plan to visit there during the end of July certainly have a treat in store for you. The Houston Comix Fair organizers have invited Scott (ZOT!) McCloud to be a guest at their annual festivities. This is Scott's first major convention appearance, and we're glad that the folks in Texas think so much of him after seeing only the first two issues of ZOT!

By the time you read this, ZOT! no 4 will be on sale. Anyone who thinks ZOT! is "just for kids" might want to check out the current storyline, as a crazed Dekko fights his own memones, trying to rationalize his abandonment of representational art in favor of abstraction. There's nothing "childish" about *that* situation — it's the central problem facing artists in the 20th century! (All this and teen-age superheroism too *wow!!*)

For those interested in attending the Houston Con, the dates are July 27-29. Cat and Dean made the trip to the Union's biggest state last year, and guarantee everyone will have a great time if they put in an appearance.

CONVENTIONS PAST; TOO LATE FOR AN UPDATE:

We'd like to thank the friendly folks at Second Genesis Distributors in Portland, Oregon for the wonderful hospitality during our visit to their city for Phoenix II convention on May 6th. We drove the 14 hours from our home in California, and it was one of the most beautiful tours we've ever taken. Anyone who's been in Oregon knows what we mean, for those of you who've never visited the area, we recommend it highly.

We took a long weekend off so we could make the drive a leisurely one, and had the opportunity to stop off in places like Eureka in California, and Grant's Pass, Medford and Roseburg in Oregon. The Pacific Northwest is a unique place with its incredible amount of rainfall. The further north you go, the more it rains. If we ever get invited to a convention in Seattle, we'll let you know how it *is* that high up.

At any rate, Phoenix II was a great con, with plenty of funnybooks for sale, and plenty of talented artists who came out to show us their portfolios. We also had the opportunity to do some store signings at Future Dreams and Pegasus, and thanks to Don and Mike, respectively, and their customers, for the hours of interesting conversations. If you're ever up in the area, stop in and say hello to them. Comics are a thriving business in Portland thanks to guys like them, and to their distributor, Richard Finn of Second Genesis.

They'll be having another con come September, and you can find out more about it by writing Second Genesis, 1112 NE 21st Street, Portland, OR 97232. And don't forget to tell 'em we sent ya'!

HERE COMES THE FLAT FOOT FOOZLE WITH THE FLOY FLOY!

This is the month we've all been waiting for, the month in which we see the much awaited return of Kionsbon the Fozzie and his pal, E'l Cap'n Quick.

There's no restraining this Fozzie! From the pages of ECLIPSE MONTHLY comes the conclusion to CAP'N QUICK AND A FOOZLE. Did we say conclusion? It's only the beginning as creator Marshall Rogers launches

comicon's most bizarre characters in their own bi-monthly magazine.

We're celebrating the occasion with 32 all-new pages of graphic fantasy. No ads, nothing but non-stop action as our heroes forge the bond of their partnership and we give you the first clues as to what a young Earthling is doing hopping across the dimensions.

After you see this one, you'll wonder, "Where can they go from here?" Anywhere! According to Marshall, "We've got enough plot ideas to keep us busy until 1990!"

If you want your Fozzie fix now, check out the first issue of CAP'N QUICK AND A FOOZLE, on sale this month. And if you're heading for the San Diego Con, be sure to say hello to Marshall, who's a guest of honor.

COMING AND GOING AND MISCELLANEOUS DOINGS

This month in ECLIPSE MONTHLY, we welcome a new artist to comics, one whom we predict will become a sudden fan fave. His name is Steve Masseroni and the strip he draws is "Steel, Stealth and Magic." Take a look at his cover for the issue and see what we mean.

Also in this issue of EM is the return of Doug Wildey's "Rio," one of the most critically acclaimed series we've ever published. And, of course, B. C. Boyer's "The Masked Man" holds down the fort.

While the seventh issue of DESTROYER DUCK was the final issue in the series, Jerry Siegel and Val Mayerik's THE STARLING lives on. We're working on the first few issues of the Starling's own magazine. As soon as we have a definite release date, we'll let you know.

Speaking of endings and beginnings, MS. TREE ends her run as an Eclipse Comic this month. But fear not, mystery lovers, she lives on in her own title to be published beginning next month by Aardvark-Vanahaim, the folks who bring you CEREBUS, NEIL THE HORSE, JOURNEY and other top-notch comics. The format will be different — two-color instead of the usual four — but we urge you to continue to give Ms. Tree, and Max and Terry, your support. We know we'll be first in line to read the latest adventures.

This month also sees the newest addition to the DNAgents Dynasty: the SURGE mini-series kicks off with the hot-headed DNAgent having left the group, only to be hunted by the police. He meets up with a sensational new character named Lancer, who's part superhero and part media superstar. He's almost too incredible to describe. Meanwhile, back in the DNAgents title, the chemicals are bubbling and could it be a new DNAgent that emerges? Sorry, but you'll have to tune in to find out. This is too big a secret to give away here!

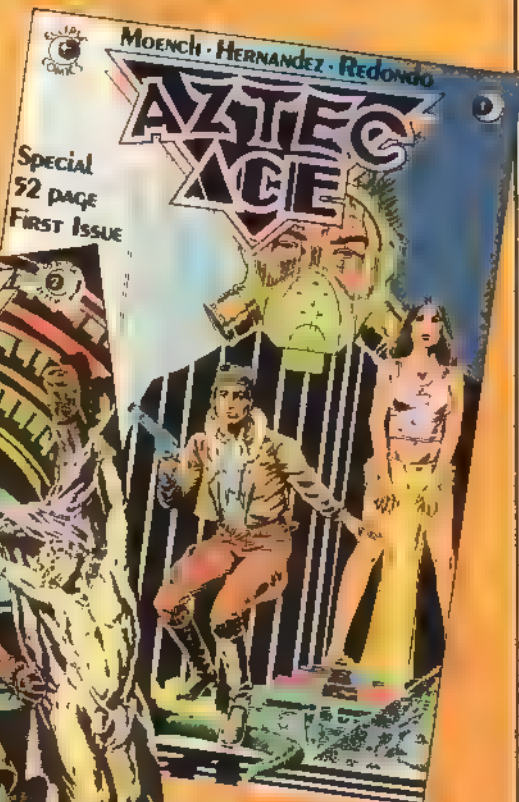
In the third leg of the DNAgents Dynasty, Mark Evanier and Dan Spiegel guide CROSSFIRE through a somewhat true story of a young girl who travels to Hollywood only to get involved with a shock horror movie producer. If it's gritty Hollywood drama you're searching for, your search is over. After writing over 200 television scripts, Mark's the one person in comics who can accurately portray the Hollywood scene. So when's he going to write a DNAgents TV series? Only time will tell, folks. Only time will tell.

And on the subject of time, we've just run out of it. See you next month.

TWICE UPON A TIME, IT TOOK TIME TO MAKE A HERO...

AND IN THE TIME YOU JUST TOOK
TO BLINK, HE CRASHED EVERY
MOMENT OF INFINITY, MAKING
THE PAST SAFE FROM THE FUTURE.

NEW FROM



*NINE-CROCODILE,
THE EBONATI
SHADOW-KNIGHTS,
FIVE-WORLDS,
BIG BEN'S FOGGY BANGER,
WALKING NIGHTGAUNTS, LOVE
AND DEATH, THE GHOST OF
RAYMOND CHANDLER,
SEWER-GATEWAYS TO
WONDER, DARKRODS,
SLUG-SLIME, QUETZALCOATL*

*RETRO-ANIMATE, A JUKEBOX STOCKED WITH THE
HITS OF THE AGES, MONTEZUMA CONTERMINOUS, AND
THE CURRENT ADDRESS OF AMELIA EARHART--
ALL THIS AND MORE LURKS WITHIN THE STRANGE PAGES OF*

Send to: Eclipse Comics, 81 Delaware St, Staten Island, NY 10304

This is one book I don't want to miss! Please send me a 6-issue
subscription beginning with AZTEC ACE no. 2. Enclosed is \$9.00
(\$12.00 in Canada).

Also, please send me a copy of the giant-sized First Issue for
\$2.25 (\$2.75 in Canada)

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STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

AZTEC ACE

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AND DAN DAY

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INSIDE-OUT ACE

Although I'm sure it's purely coincidental, I have the feeling that the first few issues of the new Eclipse comic *Zot!* will provide a strange counterpoint to the first few issues of *AZTEC ACE*. While *Zot!* seems to be moving steadily outward, *ACE* seems to be rushing inward at the same pace. Correct me if I'm wrong, but it looks as though we haven't seen the last of any of the various milieus and situations covered in the first issue. Sometime in the future we'll go back to where we presently were in the past, if we haven't already by now, in other words.

And how will we get there? Will each issue be a small whirlpool of its own, as no. 1 was, or will the various trips into and re-into time become spirals across the series with more and more minute complications? Either way, I can see that this is going to be a tricky strip to follow.

Let me shower a little praise on an aspect of *AZTEC ACE* which helped this reader through the almost maddening shifts which are so important to the structure of the book. It was a good idea to give each little sliver of time its own title-heading, and I hope this device continues in future issues. Besides giving the book a syncopated, experimental-novelish voice, the mini-titles help to isolate each particular segment of time in the narrative. Once we begin a new title, we are assured of a reasonably coherent flow of time until the next one. In effect, the entire first adventure is much like a string of beads, and our perception of it is pretty much shaped by the fashion in which they were strung . . . this time. By ending at the beginning with a few reversals, you make me wonder what the second go-round will be like. Is it true that you're going to release issue three before issue two?

Eric Yarber
8307 Laconia
St. Louis, MO 63123

Note quite, Eric, but as stated elsewhere and somewhere or other, the winners of our Name-the-Camel Contest in issue no. 23 have already been notified.

Everything else you speculate is true -- in spades -- about issue no. 7 ("Murdericide") but is thoroughly incorrect about every other issue completed thus far, amounting to eight, and mind-bogglers all.

*(Glad you check out *Zot!*; more readers should do the same. . .)*

WELL, H.G., R.I.P.?

Ever since I read in *Comics Scene* that Doug Moench would be writing a new comic for Eclipse called *AZTEC ACE*, I have eagerly anticipated the first issue. Now I'm happy to tell you it was well worth the wait.

The basic premise of the series (and aside from the fact that it was Doug's creation) is what enticed me to

buy it. I've always been fascinated by the notion of time travel, but I don't think anyone has ever fully explored the literally endless possibilities of it, except perhaps H.G. Wells in *The Time Machine*. After reading *AZTEC ACE* no. 1, however, I suspect that you are actually prepared to take advantage of the limitless story potential time travel affords.

As for specific comments on no. 1, the two most appropriate descriptives are "fascinating" and "fun." Now that I think about it, I find it hard to believe that no one has ever done a time travel comic book series before. Your writing is still the best around, Doug, and I find it very interesting to compare your work here on *AZTEC ACE*, which has a much different feel than your previous work on *Moon Knight* and your current work on *Batman/Detective*. By the way, your text page at the end of no. 1 is very enlightening, in a deliberately confusing sort of way, and Michael's art is topnotch. Didn't he do a backup story in an issue of *Moon Knight*?

I hope *AZTEC ACE* lives up to the potential displayed in its first issue. If anyone can pull this off and make it successful, entertaining and unique, you can.

P.S. Since I never got around to writing you a letter when you were leaving Marvel, I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you that your *Moon Knight* series is the best comic I've ever read, and I think Jim Shooter is a fool for letting you (or forcing you to) go. "Stained Glass Scarlet" and "Scarlet in Moonlight" are without a doubt two of the most beautiful, tragic, moving stories I have ever experienced. Issues 22-26 were, for me, the high point of the *Moon Knight* series, with each issue progressively better than the last. "Hit It!" in no. 26 came as close to perfection in its blend of words and pictures as any comic will ever do, and I just wanted you to know that you were responsible for a comic that touched me in a way I'll never forget. Thank you.

Mark Pruitt
69 Sherwood Loop
Searcy, AR 72143

*And thank you, Mark. Leaving *Moon Knight* was not easy -- and yes, Michael Hernandez did illustrate a backup story -- but however difficult the parting was, I think *AZTEC ACE* more than compensates the loss. Indeed, as much as I truly enjoyed creating (with Don Perlin) and developing (with Bill Sienkiewicz) the *Moon Knight* character, I think *Ace* holds far more unique and exciting potential. I've got three file drawers crammed with notes, scenes, bits of dialogue and shlick, and ideas for future stories. (And on top of that, Cat's always got half-a-skullful of other suggestions. . .) Approaching the enormity of each new issue requires a deep intake of high-charged air, but so far I just can't wait to dig in every time. . .*

As for other time travel comics series, I can only

think of one but there must have been more. The one: DC's Rip Hunter, Time-Master. Can anyone out there think of others?

And thanks for the comparison with Wells. We're honored, but not even the esteemed H.G. explored the literally endless possibilities of Juicy Fruit and slug slime, did he . . . ?

HAIL ERISI!

Discordian Document no. 5:23 from the Paratheo-Anametamystikhhood of Eris Esoteric (POEE; A Non-Prophet Disorganization):

Betcha didn't gno that I'm "Archbishop of Ordinations" for the POEE, d'ja? Well, B* turned me on to that Aztec comic and I ain't so dim as to miss "Disorientations 5:23." So, by the chaos invested in me by his wholliness Malaclypse the Younger & the State of Euphoria, I hereby declare all involved as Episkopi of POEE (if they wanna be). Bark if you love Sirius. Do I hear an "arf"? Close enough.

Frater Chao-Tzu (a.k.a. Roldo)
1232 Downing Street
Winnipeg, R3E 2R7 Canada

Um . . . anyone for a golden apple? And a how wow for six from Sirius.

A QUALITY SHADE OF PASTEL (SORRY, JDM)

Just how good was AZTEC ACE no. 1? Well, it was written better than just about every comic in the shop. I would have said "on the stands," but with direct sales only books that just doesn't hold anymore. Most of this first issue's success was due to Doug Moench's fabulous script . . .

As I grow older, I become more and more disenchanted with superhero comics. I now look for diversity for stories with a little more meat to them. Without a doubt, Doug is the best in the business when it comes to doing these realistic, mature, "adult" stories I've come to crave. Approaching one of Doug's stories, I always expect more than a shallow plot with endless fight scene after fight scene.

AZTEC ACE represents the apex in my (and Doug's) venture away from conventional comics stuff. He loads his stories with richly diverse elements, like Zek's taste in women, clothing, music, and drink, while maintaining a consistently high level of plotting, storytelling, and the sheer mechanics of writing. To slip into a cliché for a second, maybe now he'll get some long-deserved recognition from fandom for this effort.

I really don't have much to say about the art, other than it looked fantastic. I understand Dan Day will soon take over the pencilling, so let me congratulate Michael Hernandez for an outstanding initial effort. I'm sure Nestor will maintain his fine inking on Dan's work. The coloring, however, was the icing on the cake. Cat, you should be truly proud of your coloring department; Eclipse probably boasts the highest production quality exhibited by any of the zillions of companies extant.

So I'd have to say AZTEC ACE no. 1 was pretty darn good. If there's any justice or taste in this world, you should have a vast audience. Thanks again for a truly topnotch story.

Gabriel Carras
New York University
5-11 University Place, Room 931
NYC, NY 10003

Gabriel, if you ain't a devil-hunter, you're at least an angel. I thanks ya!

JUKE JAUNTS

Well, I've finally gotten around to LOCing you about AZTEC ACE — and not because I hesitate to express my opinion on it, either. Here's my honest critical evaluation: AZTEC ACE IS GREAT!

As we've all said before, I hope this becomes Eclipse's version of American Flag! in terms of popularity. By matching good script to good art, it already ranks among

my favorites, independent or "mainstream." I give it my highest accolade: I'll buy it! (And I don't even do that for X-Men anymore.)

I like the Ace himself considerably, although what I really enjoy is heroine Bridget and issue no. 1's bathtub byplay. ("What about the game? You like them, too?") Moreover, this first entry bespeaks good story, and considerable research. Moench, as an ex-reporter (?), is impressively knowledgeable about matters more in-depth than which villain the Hulk fought in Tales to Astonish no. 90, and it shows. The Aztec culture, the Big Ben scene, and all the historical artifacts bear testimony to his know-how, which he smoothly integrates into the narrative without making it seem obtuse. It's like reading a hip update of an old Gardner Fox or John Broome story — with something extra.

Can't fault the art either; Michael and Nestor do an excellent job, demonstrating as much care in getting things right as Moench. The visuals contain enough realism to make the unreality a pleasant shift when it appears.

On the matter of jukeboxes: It's fun that Doug chose a juke from the 50s, but how's about one from 2015? Or 2947? Or even 1990? (That way, we'll know in relatively short order whether Doug is a phony or not . . .) Such jukeboxes would be stocked with pop music from those eras, and thus the challenge would be set for Moench to predict what futuristic rock will sound like — and nothing less than full lyrics will do!

Anyway, here's hoping the Ace keeps scoring for another fifty issues at least. Don't let this one go. I enjoy it too much. And until you spin off a series about a swashbuckling time-travelling cook called *Aspic Ace* . . .

Lou Mougin
826½ Plum
Graham, TX 76046

Although I did indeed work for the Chicago Sun-Times back around 1971-73, Lou, I was never actually a news reporter; instead, I wrote a series of feature articles for the Sun-Times' Sunday supplement magazine, Midwest.

One of the pieces, however, about violence on the midnight subways, could rightly be deemed "personalized news reporting" of the kind George Plimpton pioneered — although I doubt if even George would get mugged at 2 AM just for a story. (On the other hand, Hunter Thompson did get stomped by the Hell's Angels for the sake of a book . . .)

At any rate and nevertheless, I do undertake serious research for AZTEC ACE. Thus far I've been able to make use of only some 5% to 30% of the total research for each story — even taken in slivers, history is a big place — chalking up the rest to self-education of the Abe Lincoln kind. Abe, by the way, guest-stars in issue no. 73, a fear-fraught all-action ish, the one all those pilgrims, true believers, and effendis have been waiting for.

(And for those who really care, the Hulk fought the Abomination in Tales to Astonish no. 90.)

As for the Anachrony Den of Infinity . . . well, now . . . while it does impossibly contain scads of souvenir artifacts from our "future" (at least dating up to Ace's native time in the 23rd Century, beyond which he cannot go without risking the hounds of Krok), it does not contain any future jukes. Ace has inspected every box ever made, and the one he's got is the best, period — which is the name of that tune.

In closing, some good news for fans of Caza, Bridget, and Tempus: Cat has informed me that Dean has just informed her that Jan has just informed him that the incoming orders for AZTEC ACE no. 3 have just exceeded the outgoing orders for no. 2. Yowza! Keep this up, People, and we just might succeed in the overwhelming face of external odds as well as internal evens. And Dan, Nestor, Cat, Dean, Michael, Denis and Phil ain't the only ones who are thrilled . . .

I am too.

— Doug Moench

P.S. Next issue (special no. 5 edition, "The Slain Slug of 1940") is set at the 1939-40 New York World's Fair. Gonzo Futurama galore!

HE USED TO
WORK THE WRONG
SIDE OF THE
LAW... AND
EVERYBODY
WANTED HIM
DEAD.

NOW, HE WORKS
THE RIGHT SIDE
OF THE LAW.

... AND EVERYONE
STILL WANTS
HIM DEAD.



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